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Hsiachichou

CHAPTER 3

THE PREFERRED MARRIAGE

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597
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The institutions of the village of Hsiachichou are similar to those of China in general in that they allow a variety of means of marriage and adoption. A family with a son may adopt a female child and raise her as his wife, or they may wait until he is an adult and then look for a wife. A family with a daughter may give her away in adoption as a child, or they may raise her as a member of the family and later choose between a patrilocal or matrilocal marriage. The institutions of the community give scope for the formation of a great variety of genealogical patterns. Our task here will be to trace the genealogical history of Hsiachichou during the course of the past sixty years in an attempt to determine what some of the factors were which went into the formation of this particular pattern. Given the existence of institutions which encourage certain social arrangements and discourage others, and recognizing that the range of choice is partially determined by vagaries of human genetics, we will attempt to discover why the people of Hsiachichou chose to arrange their social world in the way they did.

Our first step in this direction willbe to describe the institutions of marriage and adoption as they existed in Hsiachichou during the period 1870-1960. The genealogical decisions made by individual families arose as choices between alternative forms of marriage and adoption, and we will need to understand the nature of these institutions

in order to understand why village families acted in the way they did. What are the various forms of marriage? How are they arranged? By whom are they arranged? What obligations and expectations do they create? What rituals are associated with each form of marriage? What is the meaning of these rituals? The answers to these questions naturally depend in part upon whether we are talking about 1870 or 1960. The bride of 1870 traveled to her husband's home in a sedan chair carried by several strong men; the bride of 1960 made the trip in a hired car at the head of a caravan of taxis. There have also been some adjustments in the rituals of marriage and adoption, but by and large the rules which governed these social transfers were still recognized and accepted in Hsiachichou in 1960. We will therefore describe these institutions as though we were dealing with a single point in time rather than with a period of ninety years.

Although we are not prepared here to argue why it should be so, it is clear that what we have called the preferred patrilocal marriage is the more socially desirable form of marriage in Hsiachichou. It is the preferred form in the sense that it is the form of marriage which everyone would choose if form were the only consideration. When the villagers speak of marriage in general, they always mean the preferred patrilocal form of marriage, and the assumption that it is the form of marriage is clearly not new. The ritual procedures for enacting the preferred form of marriage are much more elaborate than for any of the other forms of marriage, and the villagers themselves regard the ritual associated with these other forms of marriage as having been modeled

583 591 681 178 593 597 58 181 ter 1910 a total of 17(17 percent)made matrilocal marriages. Here again we find a demonstration of a point we have made several times already. Although many aspects of marriage and adoption have changed in Hsiachichou in recent years, the basic meaning and values of the family have not changed. When a decision about marriage or adoption involves the possibility of a family's not achieving the goal of genealogical continuity, they make and somehow manage to enforce whatever decision is necessary in order to achieve this goal.

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CHAPTER 13

THE EXCEPTIONS

128 183 • 58 [54] The great majority of the people of Hsiachichou marry young and early in their marriage bear the children who will perpetuate their family line and support them in their old age. Occasionally, however, it happens that a man or woman does not marry, or, more often, that they do not marry until later in life. Also, there have been a number of women in Hsiachichou whose lives have departed from the normal pattern as a result of their having been forced to work as prostitutes. Since the situation of these people is obviously very different from that of the person who married at the normal time, we have thus far largely excluded them from our discussion of marriage and adoption. To fill this lacuna in our analysis, we will consider some of the conditions which create these exceptions. Why do some men and women never marry, and why is it that a number of women work for a time as prostitutes? Secondly, we will look at the decisions these people make about male and female adoption. How often do they adopt children, and what are some of the considerations which enter into their decisions? Finally, we will be interested in the effects of prostitution upon the family. How does the family in which a daughter is forced to work as a prostitute differ from one in which she marries in the normal way? While recognizing that prostitutes and the unmarried constitute exceptions to the villagers' expectations, we will attempt to show that these exceptions follow a regular pattern.

125 adopting-in or adopting-out parents but in a few cases,
582
597 only the adopted child.

Regular Marriage

• 58 There is a traditional ideal form of marriage, one
[183] arranged by a matchmaker between two families who are strangers or who are at least not already related, the boy's family slightly richer than the girl's, and with the couple residing permanently in the home of the groom's father. This marriage should occur when the male completes his military service and he should be two to four years older than his wife but a greater age span is acceptable.

582 Although all but patrilineal parallel cousin marriages are permitted for parts of China, no cousin marriages were recorded for Sanlei Ts'un as villagers claimed they were acceptable but undesirable. This differs from Gallin's study on Taiwan's West Central plain where cousin marriages were estimated to total about four per cent (1966:153). There is absolute surname exogamy. Additionally, although not as strongly sanctioned, marriage between members of certain paired surnames are not permitted, i.e., Chien and Liao, although there was one example in the village. Outside of these restrictions, there is no patterned regularity indicating certain surnames commonly marry each other. Statistically, there is a strong tendency towards